

Mississippi 2011

Child Restraint

Survey

Prepared for:
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Child Restraint Use in Mississippi

In 2011, highway safety continues to be a major health problem for children in Mississippi. Each year citizens, governmental agencies and private advocacy groups participate in a major effort to combat this needless death and injury to our children. Tickets are written to those who violate the child restraint law. Large numbers of child restraint clinics staffed by highly trained child restraint technicians are provided at no cost to the public. A sizable amount of time, effort and money are devoted to increasing child restraint use. These efforts include media campaigns, brochures, programs, providing free child restraint seats to those who cannot afford them, etc.

In order to help evaluate the effect of these programs, child restraint surveys are conducted annually in cities in every geographical area of Mississippi. The surveys and data analysis provide a basis for conclusions about the usage of child restraints in the state. Since these surveys are observational, a measure of proper restraint use is not captured, except in a very general way (e.g., incorrectly placing children in rear-facing seats on the front seat, in front of airbags).

The efforts of advocate groups and coalitions such as Safe Kids Mississippi have had gratifying results, given child restraint use in Mississippi has continued to rise over time. However, in comparison to other states, child restraint use in Mississippi continues to lag. The most current figures from the National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) indicate the national average of child restraint use in 2008 as 87% (NHTSA Traffic Safety Facts: Child Restraint Use in 2008 – Overall Results, May 2009). For a comparison in the same year, Mississippi had a calculated 77.5% usage rate in 2008 – more than a 10 percentage point disparity.

Restraint Usages of Children and Adults

Table 1: Child Restraint Use by Type of Location			
Type of Location	Using Restraints	Total Number of Children Observed	Percent Using Restraints (%)
1. Fast Food	1,095	1,349	81.2%
2. Large Shopping Mall	197	268	73.5%
3. Grocery Store	462	560	82.5%
4. Daycare or Child Learning Center	1,327	1,577	84.1%
5. Health Dept. or Human Resources	411	507	81.1%
6. Medical Care Complex	349	412	84.7%
7. Playground, Park, Museum or Zoo	278	321	86.6%
8. Small Shopping Center or Wal-Mart	1,018	1,221	83.4%
9. Discount or Dollar Store	71	96	74.0%
10. Street Intersection	1,003	1,181	84.9%
11. Church or Church Nursery	603	716	84.2%
12. Service Station	126	150	84.0%
13. Restaurant	30	39	76.9%
14. Post Office	8	8	100%
15. Bank	13	14	92.9%
Totals	6,991	8,419	83.0%

In Table 2, the percentage of drivers using seat belts by gender is presented. Of the drivers observed, 77.5% of the female drivers were belted while 68.4% of the male drivers buckled-up. Overall, 74.8% of the drivers observed were belted. This percentage is considerably low compared with this year’s official seat belt usage rate of 81.2%, which was observed in the 2011 Seat Belt and Motorcycle Helmet Survey.

Table 2: Seat Belt Usage Status for Drivers			
Gender	Using Seat Belt	Total Number of Observations	Percent Using Seat Belts (%)
1. Male	1,207	1,764	68.4%
2. Female	3,260	4,205	77.5%
Totals	4,467	5,969	74.8%

In the 2011 child restraint study, there were 6,136 vehicles observed in 37 municipalities during the survey period from March to June. These cars contained a total of 8,419 children estimated to be under the age of 7. A complete analysis of the data resulted in a 2011 overall calculated child restraint usage rate of 83.04% for Mississippi.

Table 1 provides information on the type of location, the number of children observed and whether they were restrained. It should be noted that none of the locations are definitive of that type of location, but only provide some indication of the level of restraint use.

Child Restraint Use by Seating Postition of Child

It is known that the safest place for a child to be restrained, or for that matter to ride unrestrained, is on the back seat (or second row of seats) of a vehicle. It would therefore be expected that adults putting children in the back seat of a vehicle would also have more awareness of the importance of using child restraints. The seating position, as well as whether the child was restrained, was recorded in this survey. As expected, children on the back seat of automobiles were restrained at a higher rate than were those on the front seat. Children in the back seat were restrained at a rate of 87.9% while children on the front seat were restrained at a rate of 73.0%.



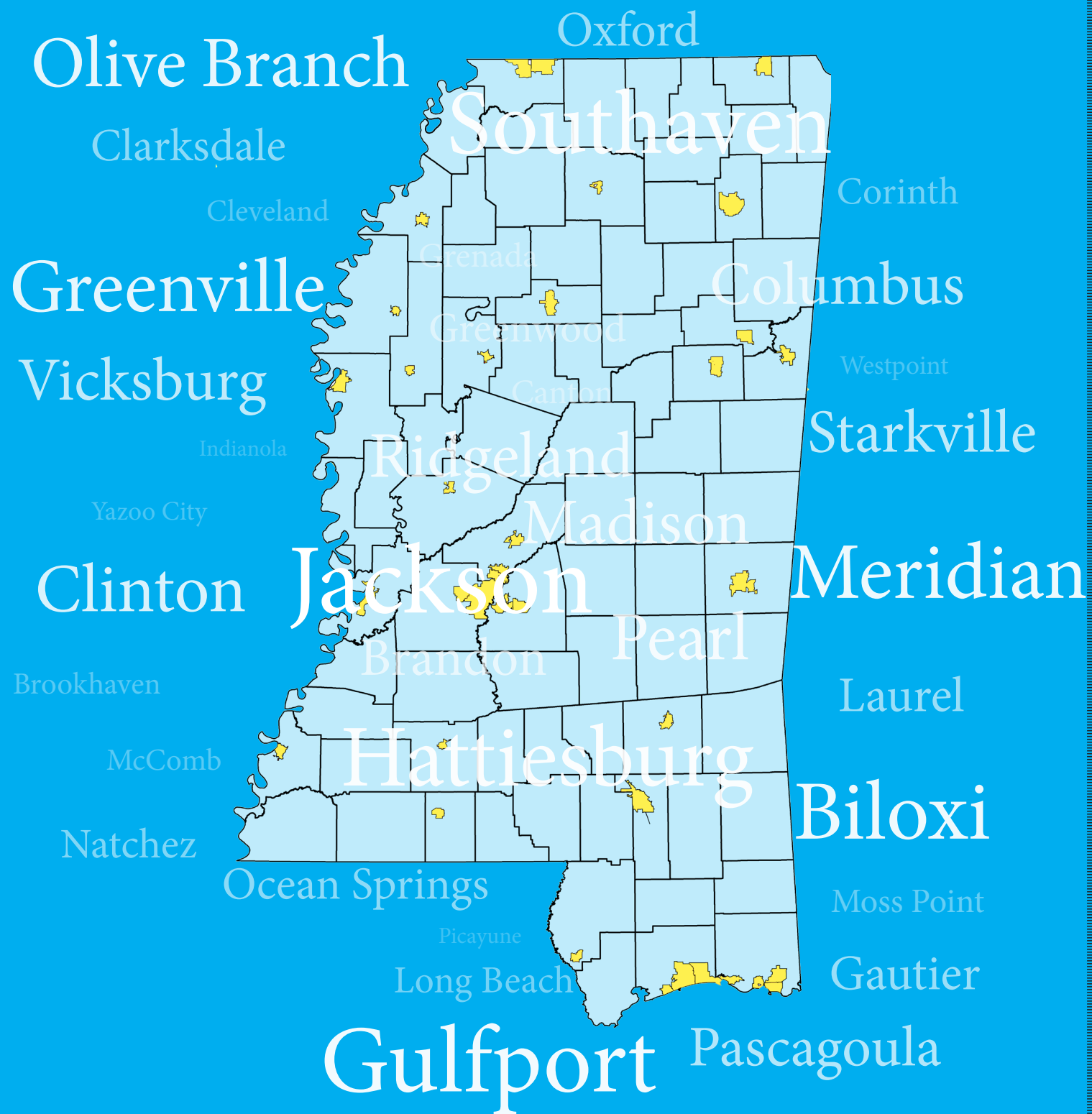
Table 3: Child Restraint by Position of Child				
Seating Position of Child	Children Restrained		Total Number of Children Observed	
	Count	Percent (%)	Count	Percent (%)
1. Front Seat	1,347	73.0%	1,846	22.5%
2. Back Seat	5,600	87.9%	6,374	77.5%
Totals	6,947	84.5%	8,220	100%

Table 4: Child Restraint by Position of Child by Gender of Driver				
Males				
Seating Position of Child	Children Restrained		Total Number of Children Observed	
	Count	Percent (%)	Count	Percent (%)
1. Front Seat	454	69.7%	651	25.7%
2. Back Seat	1,602	85.3%	1,879	74.3%
Totals	2,056	81.3%	2,530	100%
Females				
Seating Position of Child	Children Restrained		Total Number of Children Observed	
	Count	Percent (%)	Count	Percent (%)
1. Front Seat	893	74.7%	1,195	21.0%
2. Back Seat	3,998	88.9%	4,495	79.0%
Totals	4891	86.0%	5,690	100%

Male drivers were slightly more likely to place a child on the front seat than were female drivers. Children in vehicles driven by male drivers were placed on the front seat of the automobile 25.7% of the time as compared to 21.0% when the driver of the vehicle was female. However, female drivers who placed their children on the front seat were only slightly more likely (5 percent difference) to use child restraints than male drivers who had children on the front seat. Approximately 69.7% of the children on the front seat were restrained when the driver was male, while 74.7% were restrained when driven by a female. Children placed on the front seat, as opposed to the back seat, were more likely to be unrestrained regardless of the sex of the driver.

Female drivers are also slightly more likely to buckle children in the back seat when compared to male drivers. The data suggests about 81.3% of male drivers will utilize some kind of child restraint for children when they are in control of the vehicle, and likewise about 86.0% of female drivers buckle up children when in control of the vehicle. Obviously educational efforts directed at restraining children in motor vehicles and also placing these children on the back seat for safety reasons have had some positive effects in the state of Mississippi. Refer to Table 4 above for more details.

Child restraint use in Mississippi was found to be 83.04% for the year 2011. This rate is a little over three percent higher than last year’s observed rate. Over many years, the effort toward increasing and improving child restraint use has been both extensive and intensive. There is little doubt that a primary child restraint law has a significant impact on the prevalent use of child restraints in Mississippi. Also, the 2006 primary seat belt law for all front seat passengers could be an influential factor in the steady increase in child restraint use. It seems Mississippi motorists are more than ever embracing a culture of safety awareness and practices with regard to buckling up themselves as well as young children. Moving in the right direction with regard to child passenger safety is something to be viewed with pride, and perhaps with continued education and enforcement child restraint usage rates could be brought to an even higher level.



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Buckle Me Up!

Mississippi Child Restraint Laws

Under 4 years

Child restraint device or system

Ages 4 - 6

Under 4'9" tall and weighs less than 65 lbs - booster seat system

National Recommendations for Child Passenger Safety

Under 1 year

Rear-facing car seat

Ages 4 - 7

Forward-facing seat until seat is outgrown, then booster seat

Ages 1 - 3

Rear-facing car seat until seat is outgrown, then forward-facing seat with harness

Ages 8 - 12

Booster seat until child is big enough to be properly restrained by vehicle seat belt alone

The safest place for me is always the backseat! (second row of seats)

